



National Interagency Fire Center

3838 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

July 14, 2005

To: Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs

From: National Multi Agency Coordination Group

Subject: Use of Large Air Tankers and Related Issues

This memo will serve as direction regarding the use of Large Air Tankers (LATs), and other retardant/suppressant aircraft, on federally managed wildland fires for the field season 2005, and other related issues.

The following LATs and other aircraft are available and authorized for use on wildland fire operations managed by federal agencies:

- Those federally contracted LATs that have successfully completed their Operational Service Life (OSL) evaluation and have been awarded contracts under the Forest Service 2005 Airtanker Contract.
- CL-215/215T/415s. For non-federally contracted water scoopers, agreements for use and payment must be in place prior to use on federally managed fires.
- MAFFS as mobilized by the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) or by a state.
- Single Engine Air Tankers mobilized under the Interagency SEAT Contract or through agreements with cooperators.
- Helicopters contracted through USDA/USDI contracting processes and cooperator helicopters covered by appropriate use and payment agreements.

Related Issues:

Federal Lands under State protection: States may use airtankers not identified above on federal lands, when and where the State has formal protection responsibility as long as the state maintains operational control of those aircraft.

Federal firefighters on State fires: Unauthorized airtankers remain under State operational control regardless of the agency affiliation of the firefighters on the incident.

Federal Airtanker Base: Unauthorized airtankers are approved for use and retardant loading at federal airtanker bases.

Contracting oversight: No federal personnel may be assigned as a State Contract Officers Authorized Representative (COAR) on an unauthorized tanker contract. No federal employee may be assigned to a position that exercises operational control of an unauthorized airtanker.

Federal aerial supervision: Federal personnel may provide aerial supervision to unauthorized airtankers under existing standard procedures and agreements. Federal employees are authorized to perform “lead” profiles for unauthorized air tankers, if the operation is in support of a state or local fire department managed incident. In this case, the federal employee is engaged as an agent of the state or local unit, and the state or local unit retains operational control of the incident; including airspace management, assigned aircraft, objectives and resource assignment, allocation and direction.

In an emergency circumstance when lives and property are immediately threatened by wildland fire on federal lands under federal protection, a local federal line officer may, with state concurrence, take operational control over state contracted airtankers if sufficient federal aircraft are not available to protect the public, provided that the local federal line officer obtains prior approval from the Fire Director or Fire Director designee.

The following individuals are designated as approving officials for their respective Geographic Area.

Primary Contact

Alternate

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The intent of this direction is to keep non-federally authorized airtankers under the operational control of the sponsor agency. If needed, further clarification on these issues can be obtained from agency regional/national aviation and operations offices.

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/s/ Larry Hamilton
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